

Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership Meeting Outcomes

3/29/17, Dunn County Ag Service Center, Menomonie, WI

Present at the meeting: Dan Prestebak, Lindsay Olson – Dunn County Land Conservation; Tyler Gruetzmacher – Barron County Land Conservation; Alyssa Quilling – UW Stout; Rod Olson – Desair Lake Restoration; Alex Smith – DNR; Ted Ludwig – Red Cedar Basin Monitoring; Andrew Norman – WWLT; Brad Luedtke, David Cotts – 3M; Ron Verdon - TMLIA; Tom Quinn – Farmers Union; Dan Zerr – UW-Extension; Andy Johnson, Josh Benes – Marathon County

Welcome and Introductions: Everyone at the table introduced themselves. Andy Johnson and Josh Benes from Marathon County were guests at the meeting to learn more about what the Partnership is and has been doing, and to share their experiences in working on TMDL civic engagement planning in the Wisconsin River Basin. Brad Luedtke is a new member at the table, representing 3M.

Review of Last Meeting and Current Agenda: Outcomes from February meeting, as well as the current agenda, were reviewed and discussed. No changes added.

Check-In and Discussion: Everyone shared any new information/developments pertinent to the Red Cedar River Watershed efforts.

- Rod: Red Cedar Conference earlier in the month was a success, with about 440 attendees. Next year may focus more on some technical issues, and try to involve sportsman's groups more. Had a one-on-one meeting with Rep. Quinn to discuss water issues. Also met with John Gozdziński, DNR Northern Region manager. City of Rice Lake is undertaking many projects focused on controlling storm water runoff for their MS4 permit.
- Tyler: Working on certificates of compliance for farmland preservation participants. Also working on some barnyard runoff systems and trying to keep things as inexpensive as possible for the producers. Commented on Chippewa County's groundwater studies, which showed some higher phosphorus levels along the highway 53 corridor.
- Alex: Last year's pool of funding for DNR lake protection grants was underutilized, and some of that money may move into this next year's fund. **The group had a good discussion about the possibility of applying for one of these grants, perhaps focusing on some way to use it for upland soft practices, or nutrient management.** Deadline is February 1 of 2018, with awards a few months after that.
- Ron: The Interstate Civic Governance group, of which Ron, Dan P, Amanda, and Dan Z are a part, is continuing through 2017. UW-Stout is still working on signage for the Lakeside Park Rain Garden, and continuing to explore the idea of an outdoor water museum on site. Also told the group that the UW Board of Regents designated water as a topic of priority.

- Alyssa: Last year's REU students are participating in a national undergrad research conference, presenting their results from their work in our watershed. This year's group of REU students has been picked and will focus on many disciplines.
- Andrew: The Russian Slough site easement is done and waiting on DNR approval, and should close in a couple months. Also had a meeting with a Washburn Co landowner who has some land on the Brill River that he may want to preserve. Currently mostly forest.
- Ted: Will have 20 stream sites testing for phosphorus this season, and another 19 for general water quality parameters, and 7 sites on Tainter and Menomin Lakes. In 2016 only 26% of the sites tested met state water quality standards.
- Lindsay: Continues to work on Wilson Creek project (outside the TMDL area, but drains to Lake Menomin). Dunn Co will be using GCS software for tracking planning and zoning projects, but not sure how or if it can be used for BMP tracking for water quality projects. Will be attending the Lakes Conference in Stevens Point next week. Farmer led councils recently had a workshop in Ellsworth, with about 35 attendees. Met with Randy Eide and Scott Laeser (Clean Wisconsin) to discuss water quality trading in the watershed. Trading here will be problematic because of the fact that most areas are already supposed to be reducing phosphorus to meet TMDL goals. But Wilson Creek may be a good watershed to try this. Permanent or long-term practices work best for trading. The City of Menomonie wants to have any plans in place for trading by 2024.
- David: 3M will be having its Earth Day event for staff and families coming up next month. All the fields around the facility look good and planting is coming up soon.
- Dan P: Dunn Co is working on their first livestock siting permit since adopting the program in 2014 (counties have the choice to adopt this process or not). This is a learning process. Under this siting, statewide rules for facilities with between 500 and 1,000 animal units are applied to any new or expanding operation, and involves regulating odors, nutrient management, manure storage and feed storage. Attended the statewide Land and Water Conference last week, which was good and well attended. Chris Gatzke from Dan's office went to grazing plan training and is now certified to help write grazing plans. The governor's budget decreases funding for county land and water conservation staff considerably...down to 2008 levels.
- Tom: Continues to work as part of the Dunn County Livestock Working Group. A basic report should be coming from that group after the next few meetings. Farmers Union has been facilitating grant work for the farmer-led councils. A grant has been secured from McKnight Foundation for \$12,500 per each of the four councils for each of the next two years. This money will mostly be used for incentive payments.
- Dan Z: Talked a little about the decrease in the governor's budget of the line item that funds UW-Extension's natural resource education program. The governor has recommended a decrease of \$230,000 from this fund.

Discussion of Possible BMP Tracking Tool from DNR: Dan Z had a conversation with Andrew Craig of DNR a few weeks ago, and Andrew said DNR will be releasing in the next few months, a tool they're developing that can be used for tracking BMPs for water quality projects. It will be available for beta

testing by those wishing to use it. Barron and Dunn Counties may be interested in this. Dan will follow up with Andrew in the coming weeks.

This discussion branched off into many areas. Tracking some BMPs through multiple transect surveys was discussed. The fact that farmland preservation zoning areas generally have greater amounts of acreage in nutrient management spurred the group to discuss ideas for getting other towns to adopt such zoning. Andy talked about the fact that, many years ago, Marathon County decided to enforce all laws and regulations that require operations to have nutrient management plans. This is one of the reasons Marathon Co is a leader in the state in the percentage of farm acres in nutrient management.

Discussion of possible TRM grants: Dan P has been looking at whether or not to apply for a large-scale TRM grant from DNR (application due in just a couple weeks). This would require multiple producers to be willing to sign up to be a part of the project, and have work done at their operations. Although many sites/producers come to mind, none are ready to go at the scale needed. So...Dan may wait until next year and work on getting people lined up between now and then.

Discussion of New Members: Rod had talked with Mic Isham (who presented at this year's Red Cedar Conference) and Mic expressed interest in perhaps having the Lac Courte Oreilles join the Partnership. Nothing was for sure, and Rod will follow up with Mic and others.

Tyler is going to work on finding a working farmer to join the Partnership. While the Partnership has often discussed the need for more ag representation at the table, it's always been difficult to find someone who may be interested. Tyler and others will follow up to see if a potential partner can be found.

Evaluation: All attendees ranked the meeting on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Ratings were all 5, with the exception of Ted, who gave it a 4.95.

Next Meeting: The Partnership's next meeting will be Wednesday, June 14, 2017 at 9 AM in Barron. This is not the first Wednesday of June, but was the date that worked best for all.